

Comptroller of the Currency, Treasury

§ 7.5002

§ 7.5001 Electronic activities that are part of, or incidental to, the business of banking.

(a) *Purpose.* This section identifies the criteria that the OCC uses to determine whether an electronic activity is authorized as part of, or incidental to, the business of banking under 12 U.S.C. 24 (Seventh) or other statutory authority.

(b) *Restrictions and conditions on electronic activities.* The OCC may determine that activities are permissible under 12 U.S.C. 24 (Seventh) or other statutory authority only if they are subject to standards or conditions designed to provide that the activities function as intended and are conducted safely and soundly, in accordance with other applicable statutes, regulations, or supervisory policies.

(c) *Activities that are part of the business of banking.* (1) An activity is authorized for national banks as part of the business of banking if the activity is described in 12 U.S.C. 24 (Seventh) or other statutory authority. In determining whether an electronic activity is part of the business of banking, the OCC considers the following factors:

(i) Whether the activity is the functional equivalent to, or a logical outgrowth of, a recognized banking activity;

(ii) Whether the activity strengthens the bank by benefiting its customers or its business;

(iii) Whether the activity involves risks similar in nature to those already assumed by banks; and

(iv) Whether the activity is authorized for state-chartered banks.

(2) The weight accorded each factor set out in paragraph (c)(1) of this section depends on the facts and circumstances of each case.

(d) *Activities that are incidental to the business of banking.* (1) An electronic banking activity is authorized for a national bank as incidental to the business of banking if it is convenient or useful to an activity that is specifically authorized for national banks or to an activity that is otherwise part of the business of banking. In determining whether an activity is convenient or useful to such activities, the OCC considers the following factors:

(i) Whether the activity facilitates the production or delivery of a bank's products or services, enhances the bank's ability to sell or market its products or services, or improves the effectiveness or efficiency of the bank's operations, in light of risks presented, innovations, strategies, techniques and new technologies for producing and delivering financial products and services; and

(ii) Whether the activity enables the bank to use capacity acquired for its banking operations or otherwise avoid economic loss or waste.

(2) The weight accorded each factor set out in paragraph (d)(1) of this section depends on the facts and circumstances of each case.

(3) In addition to the electronic activities specifically permitted in § 7.5004 (sale of excess electronic capacity and by-products) and § 7.5006 (incidental non-financial data processing), the OCC has determined that the following electronic activities are incidental to the business of banking, pursuant to this section. This list of activities is illustrative and not exclusive; the OCC may determine that other activities are permissible pursuant to this authority.

(i) Web site development where incidental to other banking services;

(ii) Internet access and e-mail provided on a non-profit basis as a promotional activity;

(iii) Advisory and consulting services on electronic activities where the services are incidental to customer use of electronic banking services; and

(iv) Sale of equipment that is convenient or useful to customer's use of related electronic banking services, such as specialized terminals for scanning checks that will be deposited electronically by wholesale customers of banks under the Check Clearing for the 21st Century Act, Public Law 108-100 (12 U.S.C. 5001-5018) (the Check 21 Act).

[61 FR 4862, Feb. 9, 1996, as amended at 73 FR 22242, Apr. 24, 2008]

§ 7.5002 Furnishing of products and services by electronic means and facilities.

(a) *Use of electronic means and facilities.* A national bank may perform, provide, or deliver through electronic

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means and facilities any activity, function, product, or service that it is otherwise authorized to perform, provide, or deliver, subject to § 7.5001(b) and applicable OCC guidance. The following list provides examples of permissible activities under this authority. This list is illustrative and not exclusive; the OCC may determine that other activities are permissible pursuant to this authority.

(1) Acting as an electronic finder by:

(i) Establishing, registering, and hosting commercially enabled web sites in the name of sellers;

(ii) Establishing hyperlinks between the bank's site and a third-party site, including acting as a "virtual mall" by providing a collection of links to web sites of third-party vendors, organized by-product type and made available to bank customers;

(iii) Hosting an electronic marketplace on the bank's Internet web site by providing links to the web sites of third-party buyers or sellers through the use of hypertext or other similar means;

(iv) Hosting on the bank's servers the Internet web site of:

(A) A buyer or seller that provides information concerning the hosted party and the products or services offered or sought and allows the submission of interest, bids, offers, orders and confirmations relating to such products or services; or

(B) A governmental entity that provides information concerning the services or benefits made available by the governmental entity, assists persons in completing applications to receive such services or benefits and permits persons to transmit their applications for such services or benefits;

(v) Operating an Internet web site that permits numerous buyers and sellers to exchange information concerning the products and services that they are willing to purchase or sell, locate potential counter-parties for transactions, aggregate orders for goods or services with those made by other parties, and enter into transactions between themselves;

(vi) Operating a telephone call center that provides permissible finder services; and

(vii) Providing electronic communications services relating to all aspects of transactions between buyers and sellers;

(2) Providing electronic bill presentment services;

(3) Offering electronic stored value systems;

(4) Safekeeping for personal information or valuable confidential trade or business information, such as encryption keys; and

(5) Issuing electronic letters of credit within the scope of 12 CFR 7.1016.

(b) *Applicability of guidance and requirements not affected.* When a national bank performs, provides, or delivers through electronic means and facilities an activity, function, product, or service that it is otherwise authorized to perform, provide, or deliver, the electronic activity is not exempt from the regulatory requirements and supervisory guidance that the OCC would apply if the activity were conducted by non-electronic means or facilities.

(c) *State laws.* As a general rule, and except as provided by Federal law, State law is not applicable to a national bank's conduct of an authorized activity through electronic means or facilities if the State law, as applied to the activity, would be preempted pursuant to traditional principles of Federal preemption derived from the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution and applicable judicial precedent. Accordingly, State laws that stand as an obstacle to the ability of national banks to exercise uniformly their Federally authorized powers through electronic means or facilities, are not applicable to national banks.

[61 FR 4862, Feb. 9, 1996, as amended at 73 FR 22242, Apr. 24, 2008]

§ 7.5003 Composite authority to engage in electronic activities.

Unless otherwise prohibited by Federal law, a national bank may engage in an electronic activity that is comprised of several component activities if each of the component activities is itself part of or incidental to the business of banking or is otherwise permissible under Federal law.